Learning lessons and curbing criticism: Legitimizing involuntary resettlement and extractive projects in Mozambique

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A B S T R A C T

Since 2011, thousands of people have been resettled in the province of Tete, central Mozambique to make way for open-pit coal mines. These resettlements have received widespread criticism for impoverishing already vulnerable communities and for the repressive action taken against local opposition. This repression is part of a broader array of reactions "from above" that have emerged in relation to protest. One of these reactions "from above" is that representatives of the government of Mozambique and extractive multinational companies increasingly address resettlement in Tete as a process to learn lessons from. These lessons learning practices legitimize future resettlement processes elsewhere, particularly in relation to a highly valued project of liquid natural gas (LNG) extraction in northern Mozambique. Moreover, this approach results in the *de-facto* co-optation of environmentalist non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose agendas and funding possibilities are also increasingly tuned towards learning lessons from "Tete" to improve future resettlement elsewhere. Meanwhile, the opposition of those affected by resettlement in Tete is losing resonance, allowing the coal mining companies to continue with business as usual. The data presented in this article is derived from observations made during government-organized national conferences on resettlement in November 2016 and 2018, and additional ethnographic fieldwork over the course of 2016 and 2017 in Maputo and Tete. I take these conferences as a starting point to analyze the politics of evaluation, the legitimization of displacement for extractive projects, and the co-optation of criticism.

1. Introduction

Since 2011 thousands of people have been resettled in the province of Tete, central Mozambique, to make way for open-pit coal mines. These were the country's first large-scale extractive induced resettlements and are, as this article shows, largely considered as failures, a perspective increasingly shared by state agencies and extractive companies themselves. As in the context of extractive and large-scale agricultural projects elsewhere (Borras & Franco, 2013; Hilson & Yakovleva, 2007; Li, 2011; Peluso & Lund, 2011) dispossession and displacement of populations from their lands is one of the most controversial parts of extractive operations in Mozambique. The resettlement processes in Tete were met by protests of local populations –which were violently repressed by state security forces– and by criticism of national and international NGOs and academics for impoverishing already vulnerable populations. (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Lesutis, 2019; Lillywhite, Kemp, & Sturman, 2015; Mosca & Tomas, 2011; Osório & Cruz e Silva, 2017; Selemane, 2010). This article details how the failures of coal mining induced resettlements are addressed and employed in a variety

of ways and by a range of actors through learning lessons practices. Drawing especially from interviews and observations during the first National Conference on Resettlement in Mozambique organized in November 2016, I show how these learning lessons practices connect government actors, companies, as well as civil society organizations in a process of seeking improvement, thereby legitimizing further project-induced resettlement.

I regard "learning lessons" as a set of practices that are key to the performance of transparency in relation to project-induced displacement and dispossession. By practices I refer to meaningful activities organized around common understandings, which are therefore material as well as discursive (Best, 2014, p. 22), in this case learning lessons practices from resettlement failures. In this article I argue that the deployment of lessons learning practices has three pivotal consequences. First of all, learning lessons is a central element in the performance of transparency in relation to project-induced displacement and dispossession. Secondly, learning lessons from resettlement experiences in Tete legitimizes future resettlement processes for resource extraction elsewhere in Mozambique, in particular in Cabo Delgado (northern

Mozambique) where Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) mega-projects are starting involving oil companies such as ExxonMobil, Total, Anadarko, and ENI. Thirdly, by constituting a mechanism of "inclusionary control" (Dunlap & Fairhead, 2014; Kothari, 2001) learning lessons efforts incorporate a wide range of actors—including mining opposition—resulting in the de-facto co-optation of critical voices against land dispossession due to resource extraction.

I approach the efforts to learn lessons from the resettlement processes in Tete as a form of corporate and state-driven social engineering to prevent and manage resistance in relation to resource extraction (see Verweijen and Dunlap *this issue*) and to legitimize dispossession and dislocation for extractive and other kinds of development projects. Akin to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices (Brock & Dunlap, 2018) and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) consultations (see Dunlap, 2017), learning lessons practices can be regarded a "soft" form of social engineering or counter-insurgency techniques that is directed at creating consensus and legitimacy for extractive projects (Dunlap & Fairhead, 2014; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2018). Different from CSR practices and FPIC consultations, learning lessons practices do not relate to a particular set of policies in relation to a particular extractive project. Rather, learning lessons infuses the spaces and practices of knowledge building across different projects and between various actors, including government agencies, corporations, civil society organizations, and "affected communities." I locate the learning lessons practices in conferences, reports, and field excursions in which resettlement experiences of various projects are discussed and compared under the banner of improving policy and practice. These practices are thus empirical observable as well as my synthesis of a process of social engineering from above.

The emphasis on learning lessons practices from (policy) failure are not unique to resettlement processes in Mozambique, as such practices can be understood in wider processes of market-oriented regulatory restructuring which Brenner, Peck, and Theodore (2010) have referred to as variegated processes of neoliberalization. If, as Brenner et al. (2010) argue, neoliberalization is a process of perturbations, failures and experiments and consequential continuous regulatory restructuring; the need for reorganizations, best practices, as well as learning lessons are essential parts of the process. Such practices can also be seen as part provisional governance strategies, that try to avoid failure by managing risks and measuring results (Best, 2014) and as part of a kind of "audit culture" that stimulates reform to the detriment of real effectiveness of change or constraints on the operations of extractive companies (Kirsch, 2014, p. 171; Power, 1994; Strathern, 2000). The term audit culture derives from financial accounting but as an organizational logic has been introduced in so many aspects of life in neoliberal times that it is often taken for granted (F. Li, 2016, p. 11; Strathern, 2000, p. 2). Audit practices involve particular forms of governance that seeks to monitor, evaluate, measure and rank according to certain indicators of performance. Audit practices can be regarded as "rituals of verification," as Power (1997) calls it, "in which reform is simulated rather than enacted" (see also Kirsch, 2010, p. 87). Learning lessons efforts, such as the National Meetings organized in Mozambique on resettlement, manifest as ritual performances of evaluation that suggest the wish from government and corporate actors to address failure and criticism, and thereby emphasize a desire for improvement (see also Kirsch, 2014; Power, 1997; Strathern, 2000). With its focus on "process" and seemingly inevitable improvement, learning lessons forms set of practices that is part of a wider language around extractive activities of accountability, transparency, responsible management, CSR, and participation that is persuasive and difficult to criticise (Hetherington, 2011; Kirsch, 2014; F.; Li, 2009, p. 219; T.; Li, 2007; Rajak, 2011).

Learning lessons, as other kinds of audit practices, is not a neutral process as it situates cases or certain practices somewhere on a spectrum between best practice and worst-case scenarios (Chong, 2018; F. Li, 2016, p. 11; Strathern, 2000, p. 1). Consequently, it becomes important to draw attention to the kinds of lessons that are being learned, which

are contingent on the types of solutions and improvements that future resettlement processes or better regulation might offer (see also F. Li, 2009, p. 224; T. Li, 2007; Ferguson, 1990). This process is well characterized by Tania Li's (2007) twofold understanding of rendering technical, which on the one hand refers to making a certain domain knowable and defined. Learning lessons is in this sense about grasping, mapping, and characterizing the process of resettlement, and constructing a narrative that connects the proposed intervention to the problems that need solving. On the other hand, Li (2007) stresses that questions that are rendered technical are simultaneously rendered nonpolitical. The problems (and solutions) of resettlement are for example located in technical flaws (e.g. the need for better housing), flawed capacity (e.g. more studies about cultural practices, more attention to livelihood strategies) or legal inadequacy (e.g. stricter laws). Then the question becomes how we can go from "bad resettlement" to "good resettlement", thereby normalizing the process, while avoiding or neutralizing fundamental and political questions about resettlement and dispossession, and simultaneously curbing the risk of rejection or conflict around extractive projects.

Criticism of resettlement in Mozambique is further curbed by the multiparty character of learning lessons, as these practices stimulate critical thinking and joint efforts by government agencies, the extractive industry and civil society organizations. The notion "inclusionary control" is helpful in this regard, as Dunlap and Fairhead (2014, pp. 945–946) note—drawing on the work of Kothari (2001, p. 143)— "the very act of inclusion, of being drawn in as a participant, can symbolize an exercise of power and control over an individual." As I will show further on, getting various people around the same table (or in the same conference room) reduces spaces of conflict and potentially disempowers those who may be in a position to challenge and confront power relations and structures. Creating collaborations is all the more powerful when this happens under the banner of fostering "constructive" negotiations, creating an illusion of dialogue, of democratic decision making (Dunlap, 2017, p. 4), and of learning lessons from past failures.

This paper contributes to the theorization of the politics of evaluation in the legitimization of dispossession in the context of extractive projects and the co-optation of activism (see also Dunlap, 2017; Verwijen & Dunlap, *this issue*). It details the process by which the effort of learning lessons in relation to a particular resettlement process in a particular place influences and legitimizes wider resettlement thinking and practices in other places. As such, this article does not focus on a single case study or one particular extractive sector (coal, gas or heavy mineral sands for example), but rather looks at how actors and practices become connected around a problem and strategy (Best, 2014, p. 25). Its methodology is to "study through" by focusing on the ways in which resettlement policy and thinking is understood in relation to the experiences of different sectors by tracing ways in which power creates webs and relations between actors, institutions and discourses across time and space (Wright & Reinhold, 2011, pp. 87–88). Therefore, I do not only address the role of corporations, but also consider the state (or ruling elites) as a central actor in the facilitation and framing of extractive projects and land deals (Buur, Nystrand, & Rasmus Hundsbæk Pedersen, 2017; Fairbairn, 2013; Ouma, 2014; Schubert, 2018; Wolford, Borras, Hall, Scoones, & White, 2013). In concurrence with Salimo (2019, p. 105), I employ a disaggregated view of the state (see also Leifsen, Gustafsson, Guzmán-Gallegos, & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2017; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2018), as consisting of different agencies, ministries, and hierarchies, that sometimes also compete with one another (see also Buur & Sumich, 2019; Fairbairn, 2013; Salimo, 2018). More generally, the article reveals how strategies "from above" are situated in relation to the wider extractive context.

The data presented in this article is derived from observations made during the first government-organized National Meeting on resettlement in November 2016 and the second National Meeting in 2018 (31 November – 1 December). It is complemented by data gathered during ten months of fieldwork in Maputo and Tete over the course of 2016 and

2017 that included interviews with staff of extractive companies, sub-contracted consultants, government officials, and representatives of civil society organizations. I take the first National Meeting as a starting point to analyze the politics of evaluation and legitimization of extractive projects and the co-optation of criticism.

The article is structured as follows: The first section outlines the context of resettlement in Mozambique and discusses why it is important for extractive companies to "get resettlement right" and how it has become the main focus of protest and criticism against extractive projects. The subsequent three sections address each a particular set of actors which may be considered as "from above", extending the vertical spatiality of the state (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002). Each of these sections details how a particular actor is learning lessons from the resettlement experiences in Tete. These actors concern, first, the government of Mozambique. Second, I present the position of extractive companies in relation to resettlement activities, showing how corporate interest in resettlement waxes and wanes. Third, I discuss the position of NGOs and how they partake in learning lessons efforts. In the conclusion I will reflect on how the learning lessons practices legitimate and shape displacement and dispossession and sustains business as usual for corporations in the extractive sector.

2. Involuntary resettlement and protest in mozamique

Large-scale mining (and other) projects often require the displacement of people from their land and houses, a process that is referred to as "involuntarily resettlement". It is involuntary because decisions over land use lay with the government, as in Mozambique all land is owned by the state. In the name of national interest, the government may opt to prioritize subsoil exploration over other types of land use (Porsani & Lalander, 2018). The displacement and resettlement of (especially rural) populations is far from a novel practice in Mozambique considering the history of forced displacement and dispossession by the Portuguese colonial administration (*aldeamentos*), and post-independence villagization programs (*aldeias comunais*) (Borges-Coelho, 1998). In addition, the country has known displacements for flooding, large-scale development projects such as the Cahora Bassa dam (Isaacman, 2005), and conservation projects, such as the resettlements in Massingir for the frontier peace park at the border with South Africa and Zimbabwe (e.g. Arnall, Thomas, Twyman, & Liverman, 2013; Milgroom & Spierenburg, 2008).

The recent increase in resettlements in relation to extractive projects started in the second half of the 2000s, with the construction of large open-pit coal mines in the district of Moatize located in Tete, a province in central Mozambique. To make way for these mines, over ten thousand people have been dislocated since 2013 and hundreds of families are still awaiting resettlement (Lesutis, 2019, p. 43; Wiegink, 2018). The coal mining companies facilitated the construction of new neighborhoods and two entirely new villages to house the people who were dislocated (see also Kirshner & Power, 2015). The first village, Cateme, was constructed for the people resettled for the mine owned by the Brazilian mining company Vale. The second village, Mualadzi, was constructed for the people who were resettled for the Benga mine, which was subsequently owned by the Australian companies Riversdale and Rio Tinto, currently owned by the Indian consortium International Coal Ventures Limited (ICVL). These resettlements form the most direct way by which people living in the surroundings of mining projects are affected in their daily lives and livelihoods. While such resettlement processes are often presented as development opportunities for communities (Milgroom & Spierenburg, 2008; Yarrow, 2017, p. 570), in practice these processes often turn out to be problematic and controversial, resulting in impoverishment and degrading people's quality of life (Owen & Kemp, 2015, p. 583). The resettlement experiences in Tete are no exception to this.

A series of reports written by (international) NGOs singles out a variety of problems for the people who live in resettlement areas in Tete. These problems include: insecure water supplies; the long distance to the market in Moatize (approximately 40 km away), compounded by irregular transportation; the aridity of the agricultural land allotted to the resettled families; loss of livelihood activities (farming, fishing and selling stones and charcoal); the inability to bury the dead in ancestral lands; the lack of consultation prior to the resettlement process; and the lack of information provided to the *reassentados* (resettled people) at all stages of the process (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Lillywhite et al., 2015; Sitoe & Queface, 2015).

One of the responses of *reassentados* to their precarious living conditions has been to protest in confrontational and less confrontational ways (Lesutis, 2019). In January 2012, inhabitants of the resettlement village Cateme blocked the railroad that transports coal from the Vale mining site to Beira port (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Lillywhite et al., 2015). The demonstrators were violently dispersed by state security forces and several people were detained and beaten (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Lillywhite et al., 2015; Lesutis, 2019; Marshall, 2015, p. 8). The reaction from the government security forces reflects broader tendencies of the criminalization of criticism and the securitization around extractive projects (Dunlap, 2018; Middeldorp, Morales, & Gemma van der Haar, 2015). Yet more relevant for my analysis is that in my interviews with community relations officers of LNG companies, these popular protests in Cateme were over and over mentioned as the prime example of failure in terms of how to deal with communities and discontent. Drawing on this example, my interlocutors would stress the need for "a social license to operate" as fundamental for the continuation of production processes. The fact that Vale's coal transportation was halted for three days because of a railroad blockade was cited as an economic reason for "keeping the communities happy."

Such statements should be considered in the context of multiple "political reactions from above", including CSR and participatory development initiatives, considered herein as "soft" or inclusive security measures of extractive companies (e.g. Buur & Sumich, 2019, p. 1582; Brock & Dunlap, 2018; Hönke, 2013; Verweijen and Dunlap *this issue*; Welker, 2009). In Mozambique, as Buur and Sumich (2019) recently argued, both coercive and inclusive forms of security, including company CSR measures, private security, as well as the employment of security forces of the state, work together to protect company assets as well as the rights of (some) citizens. They state that "from the colonial era of company rule to the large-scale foreign direct investments of the present day, investors have feared the destructive fires of rampant 'mobs', unruly workers and the potentially rebellious populace more generally" (Buur & Sumich, 2019, p. 1579). Subsequently they argue that while corporations and members of Mozambique's elite have often divergent interests, in general their interactions further the political project of the FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, Mozambican Liberation Front) party which has ruled the country since its independence (Buur & Sumich, 2019; Macuane, Buur, & Marcos Monjane, 2018; Schubert, 2018; Sumich, 2010). Consequently, as resettlement is a process that has engendered much resistance and protest, "getting resettlement right" is thus regarded by both corporate and state actors as fundamental for the success of a particular extractive project. It is then not surprising that the resettlement processes in Tete have emerged as experiences to generate knowledge from—or lessons—for other extractive-induced resettlement processes happening or planned across Mozambique.

Besides the coal mining-induced resettlements in Tete province there have been significant resettlements efforts around the ruby mines (in Cabo Delgado province) and the mineral sands extraction projects (in the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Zambezia, Gaza), which have also generated protests and a series of violent incidents (Valoi, 2016).[1]

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[1] Deutsche Welle. "Population of Chibuto unsatisfied with compensation of Chinese Company. "https://www.dw.com/pt-002/população-de-chibuto-descontente-com-indemnizações-de-empresa-chinesa/a-46058733, accessed 10 January 2019.

More recent resettlement efforts in Inhassunge, Zambezia province–-where the Chinese company The Great Wall Mining Development Company is conducting heavy sands explorations–have equally led to protest, in this case over compensation packages. Officials from a police Rapid Intervention Unit (*Unidade de Intervenção Rapida*, UIR) killed one person and injured two during protests in July 2018.[2] But most media and NGO attention is given to the resettlement process for the LNG project in the Afungi peninsula, Palma district, Cabo Delgado province, where oil companies Anadarko, ENI and ExxonMobil are planning to build an onshore LNG plant occupying 7,000 ha, which will affect the lives of close to 6.000 families whose livelihoods largely depend on the use of the land and sea (Salimo, 2018, p. 99). This is currently the biggest extractive-induced resettlement and compensation process in the country for which an estimated 73 million USD is reserved. Resettlement is presented as a vehicle for much-wanted development in the rural fishing villages along Afungi peninsula. But the land acquisition is also perceived with fear and skepticism, as both local populations and several civil society representatives have expressed deep concerns about looming impoverishment and the opaque consultation processes (Salimo, 2018). Recent violent attacks by local Islamic armed groups are an additional threat to such projections (Habibe, Forquilha, & Pereira, 2019; Morier-Genoud, 2018).[3]

In what follows I will explore the various ways in which the resettlement experience in Tete are informing future resettlement processes elsewhere. This became particularly apparent during the first National Meeting on Resettlement held in Mozambique.

3. The state: "The first experience"

On 22 November 2016, the first National Meeting on Resettlement (from now on referred to as "the Meeting" or "the National Meeting") was organized in Tete. The Meeting was organized by the national division of Territorial Planning and Resettlement (*Ordenamento Territorial e Reassentamento*) a branch of the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development (*Ministerio de Terra, Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Rural* – MITADER) and supported with funding from, among others, the US-based oil company Anadarko Petroleum Corp. It was attended by approximately two hundred people with different roles and positions: there were officials from different national ministries and of provincial and district governments that were dealing with (future) resettlement processes. In addition, there were representatives of mining and oil companies, a number of Mozambican and foreign academics (including myself); representatives of the World Bank; consultancy companies; journalists; NGOs and civil society organizations; and a handful of "community members" or, said differently, the people who are directly affected by (future) resettlement. Only one of these community members–who was invited by Oxfam–was from Tete. The other community members were community leaders from the district of Palma, where the LNG project will be located. All in all, the conference included mainly members of the political and economic elite.

The choice for organizing the National Meeting in Tete was deliberate, as the resettlement experiences for the coal mines served as a reference point for the conference. On the first morning, all participants were invited on a bus tour to the resettlement area of Cateme. During the Meeting, the resettlement processes in Tete, notably Cateme and Mualadzi as well as the urban resettlement neighborhood of *25 de Setembro* in Moatize town, were repeatedly invoked as experiences from which

lessons could be learned. Even though the Meeting was oriented to discuss resettlement in the widest sense, it was the mining and extractive-induced resettlements that received most attention and the experiences in Tete were used repeatedly as examples from which lessons should be taken. One of the goals of invoking the case of Tete seemed to be to take stock of what these lessons entailed in order to not make the same mistakes again, particularly not in the LNG project where even larger investments and resettlements would take place.

The importance of learning lessons was emphasized by government representatives of different agencies and of different status. I will present two illustrative quotes from government representatives, derived from comments they made at the Meeting. One of the first to speak was Paulo Auade, the governor of Tete. In his opening speech he noted the following:

> The management of resettled populations for the implementation of extractive industry and others is certainly a learning process for all of us. While there have been several setbacks during this process, [which was] the first process, luckily and thanks to unity and the efforts of all who intervened, we have overcome the main difficulties. […] All in all, today there is a need to address the confirmed negative vibes [*inhalações negativas verificadas*] of this process in such a way that these will not happen again in future resettlement processes in our province and in the country in general.

The "setbacks" and "negative vibes" that the governor was alluding to referred to the resettlement processes in Tete, which is largely considered to be "the first process." Similar understandings also resonate in the second quote I present here, which was a remark made during a Q&A session after first panel ended. A representative from the provincial government of Gaza made a rather general comment in which she explained that Gaza is one of the provinces where future large-scale displacements will take place because of the mineral sand mining projects in Chibuto district. She framed her participation in the National Resettlement Meeting as a "school" where she and her fellow Gaza colleagues would be able to learn from experiences in Tete:

> It helps us to pay attention. For us here on this first day, we are understanding the resettlement process of Cateme, with all its difficulties and all that one can criticize and do better. For us this is a school, we register this to not fall into the same mistakes. This process went as it went, and nobody should feel ashamed, it was very productive.

The representative from Gaza thus acknowledges the "mistakes" that were made in Tete and regards learning about these experiences as valuable and "productive" in order to improve resettlement processes in Gaza. Both quotes thus hint at the necessity for teasing out "*boas practicas*", which I translate here as best practices, and to learn lessons from the mistakes that were made in order to avoid these in the future and to look for "useful tools to improve the resettlement of our communities", which were the words the governor used to end his speech. This practice of learning lessons is presented as a necessary effort that has proven to be productive as already testified by a number of visible changes in current resettlement processes (Symons, 2016). Beyond such supposed improvements my aim is to tease out what else such undertakings produce, what lessons are being learned exactly, and what consequences are attached to that, also for the people living in the places from which lessons are learned.

The emphasis on lessons learning efforts as it emerges from government representatives has three salient features. The first is a perspective that views resettlement processes for the coal mines in Tete as "experiments," which fits in wider understandings of Mozambique's government being ill-equipped to deal with the arrival of big multinational corporate investors (Salimo, 2018, p. 10), but this also has consequences for the attribution of responsibility for the losses of those who have been resettled. In his presentation at the National Meeting, the

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representative of the district administration of Moatize said that: "the district of Moatize was the first experiment with resettlement in the country, on a large scale." The status of the resettlement villages in Moatize as "lessons-learning places" resonated also in many of my conversations with governance officials in the district. One official from the Moatize district administration told me that he considered Tete, and Moatize in particular, as a "kind of laboratory" and as "the first experience with the relocation of people." Such statements emphasized that the district government was inexperienced with resettlement and were often followed by the observation that "civil society" was not quick enough to react and that—at the time—the regulatory framework concerning project-induced resettlement was inexistent or very limited. Thereby, such depictions portray the resettlement processes for the coal mines in Tete as destined to fail. The emphasis on Cateme and Mualadzi being "first experiences" of both the local and national governments with large-scale extractive projects provides explanations for the flaws of the resettlement process as caused by inexperience without indicating any direct responsibility or apportioning blame for its failures. The government representative from Gaza exemplified this by using the phrase "nobody should feel ashamed."

The second feature of the emphasis on learning lessons employed by government representatives is the rendering of the lessons learned either in terms of technical or legal issues. Similar to observations made by Ferguson (1990) and Tania Li (2007), the solutions for solving resettlement problems only highlighted those problems for which a technical solution could be proposed. This was exemplified in the emphasis on better housing, in particular in relation to the houses in Cateme. As noted in every critical report and presentation about the Cateme resettlement, the houses were built on weak foundations that sagged and shifted during the rainy season and caused the walls of the houses to crack (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Macheve, 2014, pp. 54–59). Since this experience, the construction of houses and in particular the construction of a solid foundation has become a central issue in the planning of resettlements. This despite the often-heard critique that the focus on housing is a rather narrow one, as it disregards (more) fundamental issues such as livelihood security (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Lillywhite et al., 2015).

Another indication of the emphasis on technical issues is that the lack of a regulatory framework to guide the resettlement processes in Tete at the time that Vale and Riversdale (later Rio Tinto) formulated and implemented their resettlement plans was often mentioned as a reason for the flawed implementation of these processes. In his presentation during the National Meeting, Tete's provincial director of MITADER reasoned that: "before we made use of the legislation of the World Bank, but now we are satisfied, because we have a new decree number 31/2012, of 29th of August, which will provide us with some leverage in relation to the ongoing processes." Several panel slots of the Meeting were dedicated to discussing the regulatory framework that is in place since 2012, and that was amended in 2014. Jessica Milgroom (2015, p. 585) critically notes that the improvement of national laws and international frameworks may also form a resource for state agencies and corporations to legitimize resettlement and land grabs (see also T. Li, 2011). Yet what I found particularly notable was how the focus on the revised regulation seemed to avoid a more pertinent issue: despite the regulatory framework being in place, its enforcement is partial or even non-existent. This is poignantly illustrated by the government's unwillingness, or incapacity, to act on the ongoing delay to resettle more than five hundred households residing within the fences of the coal mine of the company JINDAL located in the district of Changara (Tete province).[4] The focus on new or better regulation addresses the resettlement failures as technical problems that can be solved. Such framings thereby disregard the complex realm of politics that is fundamental for the

effective implementation of any regulation.

The third salient feature of the emphasis on learning lessons by the government representatives is the performance of transparency through the organization of events, such as the National Meetings on resettlement. These meetings provide the government, and in particular MITADER, with a platform to demonstrate their willingness to learn from past experiences and affirm the desire for improvements and development. This desire for improvement was well-captured in the subtitle of the second National Meeting (held in November 2018) which was "Toward an Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Resettlement Process." During this event, the national director of MITADER started his speech by saying that one of the many lessons learned from past experiences is that resettlements are "not completely peaceful processes" and that such undertakings involve the creation of "a wound." He continued that the objective of resettlement was to hear people say, "my life is better than before" and also identified a series of challenges to attain this objective. These challenges included: the lack of knowledge about procedures and the law by all stakeholders involved; unrealistic expectations of the "affected communities"; the lack of commitment of civil society to accompany "affected populations" for long periods of time; and the difficulty in finding suitable land for resettlement. He located several of these problems with the companies, "affected communities" and NGOs, but also acknowledged the need for the government to provide a clearer division of responsibilities and more robust technical coordination. The speech of the national director was one of several moments in which government representatives demonstrated their willingness to learn from past challenges, thereby stressing the government's commitment to transparency and openness.

In relation to mining projects and accountability in Peru, Fabiana Li (2009, p. 228) asks: "what does transparency conceal? Making information explicit masks the absence of trust, uncertainty of risks, and outright rejection of mining projects that is expressed by mining critics." The focus on learning, on process, and on the willingness to improve resettlement processes in Mozambique masks the absence of a functioning rule of law and neutralizes criticism. Yet, in the case of the national conference in Mozambique an equally pertinent question may be: "what does transparency produce?" Part of this answer is that the spectacle of transparency produces the legitimization of other and future resettlement processes. The learning lessons efforts exemplified in the National Meetings suggest that things will be better in the future and enhance—existing or manufactured—trust in future resettlement processes, thereby smoothing over critical voices and ensuring a trouble-free investment climate. One of the reasons to ensure a safe and sustainable resettlement process from the government's point of view, is as the Vice Minister of MITADER claimed in her speech at the second National Meeting: "for more projects to feel their investments are safe, because no investor will feel safe when a project delays." As the next section illustrates by drawing on a company involved in the LNG project in Cabo Delgado province, corporations' fear for delays and disruption resulting from protest is indeed a major part of their motivation to invest in lessons learning efforts.

4. The companies: Obtaining a social license to operate

While the first National Meeting on resettlement in November 2016 was organized by the ministry MITADER, it was largely funded by the mid-level oil company Anadarko Petroleum Inc. Anadarko's logo was on the conference banner and the company had made one of its planes available to transport participants from airports in Maputo and Cabo Delgado to the airport of Tete. At the meeting Anadarko was represented by fourteen people (in contrast, most other extractive companies had sent only one or two representatives), which included company staff from Houston, Mozambican members responsible for community relations and media communication, and two foreign consultants specialized in resettlement. Their dominant presence showed the company's keen interest in resettlement in Mozambique. At the time of the

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[4] http://www.irinnews.org/report/97694/resettlement-conflicts-follow-mozambiques-mining-boom, accessed 10 January 2019.

conference, Anadarko's Resettlement Action Plan, the official document that details how the resettlement will be implemented, had recently been submitted to the council of ministers and was awaiting approval, which was received shortly after. Besides official approval, Anadarko also aimed for popular approval and thereby a "social license to operate", both "on site" in Palma and in the eyes of the government and NGOs. Resettlement is the most sensitive undertaking of the LNG project as it directly involves the population, and it could lead to protest, sabotage, and consequential reputational damage as well as delays in operations. It was therefore key for Anadarko that resettlement would be a smooth process.

The presence of the Anadarko team at the national meeting was striking, not only in numbers, but also in their presentation. In one of the afternoon panels on the first day, the company's resettlement coordinator provided an eloquent presentation including a simulation video of the resettlement village Anadarko intended to build. The simulation took the viewers over, between, and inside the model houses, library, police station, market, and so on. The video deeply impressed one of the future residents of this village who was sitting next to me on the first day of the conference. "Did you see that?", he said, referring to the video. "That is not a village, but a town." A director from another extractive company said he was dismayed by the video. "They set the standards too high. That [the resettlement] is a 200 billion project, our whole project in total is about 500 billion, I cannot to live up to that. […] This creates expectations." Others were less impressed, however. A researcher of one of the consultancy firms called the video "outside of reality" and found the focus on houses highly problematic, since in his experience "people care little about houses." Nevertheless, the video demonstrated again Anadarko's commitment to the resettlement process, illustrating how the National Meeting was for Anadarko a performance to show their interest in resettlement to the Mozambican government and NGOs. Anadarko's interest in the National Meeting and by extension in learning lessons from the resettlement experiences in Tete should thus be understood in the context of the "buzz" of resettlement in Palma, Cabo Delgado province, where the LNG plant is going to be built.

Anadarko's presence at, and support for, the National Meetings, and by extension the presence of other extractive companies, can be understood as a part of "corporate counterinsurgency strategies" (Brock & Dunlap, 2018; Brown, Parrish, & Speri, 2017; Dunlap, 2018) aimed winning "hearts and minds" and to "pacify" opposition. Such practices should be seen in the light of bigger tendencies of the merging of security concerns with development interventions (Buur, Jensen, & Finn, 2007; Duffield, 2001), which includes corporate practices such as militarized "hard" security on the one hand, and "soft" security practices, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), on the other (Brock & Dunlap, 2018, p. 35; Buur & Sumich, 2019; Hönke, 2013, p. 9; Welker, 2009). Understanding Anadarko's CSR practices through the lens of corporate counterinsurgency strategies is particularly relevant as according to journalist Eamon Javers, Anadarko's manager of external affairs recommended public relations experts at an oil industry conference in 2011 to download the US Army-slash-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual. Reportedly, the Anadarko manager said that "there's a lot of good lessons in there and coming from a military background, I found the insight in that extremely remarkable" (Javers, 2011: n.d.). Following this logic, the company's support to the National Meeting on resettlement can be considered in terms of a "soft" counterinsurgency approach that strengthens the legitimization of extractive operations and incorporates elites, government representatives and NGOs. Akin to CSR efforts, such "soft" approaches are fundamentally part of the security strategies of extractive operations (Appel, 2012; Brock & Dunlap, 2018, p. 35; Hönke, 2013, p. 9).

Anadarko's keen interests in getting resettlement "right" is not only

to be understood through the lens of globalized security strategies common to many extractive operations. The company's interest in paving the way for a smooth resettlement process in Palma may also have been part of Anadarko's corporate strategy to develop investments prospects.[5] In September 2019, the mid-level company's assets in the gas fields were bought by oil giant Total. Anadarko's preparations of the LNG project in Mozambique were mentioned as a factor in facilitating this deal. Laying the groundwork for the approval of a resettlement plan were a substantial part of these preparations.[6]

At the time of research, for Anadarko the National Meeting provided an occasion to learn certain lessons from past resettlement experiences, which largely seemed to be focused on company interactions with the "affected communities" and compensation issues. The calculation and distribution of such compensations is often a matter of dispute and suspicion (see also Milgroom & Spierenburg, 2008). Resettled people in Mualadzi, for instance, suspected the company to "pay" as little as possible and that the government kept a part for themselves. In turn, the companies and consultancy companies involved in designing and implementing the resettlement program usually assume the people targeted for resettlement to be opportunistic. Past experiences in Tete and elsewhere have shown that the prospect of resettlement triggers an influx of people and an inflation of property and crops in order to receive (higher) compensation. The assessment of people's properties and land use are part of the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), which are generally conducted by consultancy companies. At the Meeting there were several presentations, mainly by representatives of such consultancy companies that addressed the issue of "influx"—of people taking advantage of resettlement plans—and how to avoid or reduce this. One of these consultancy companies stressed for instance the importance of conducting fast assessments within one or two days to avoid "overnight influx", and which should be coupled by counter-checking land use, crops, and assets with drone images made before the EIA was conducted.

Another "learning lessons topic" discussed during the National Meeting that was in the interest of the extractive companies was the issue of participation during consultation meetings. These meetings are an essential part of the process by which investors can appropriate community land, as in Mozambique they can only negotiate the right to use and benefit from the land when there is an officially approved process of community consultation (Art. 13, Land Act 19/97; Otsuki, Achá, & Wijnhoud, 2017, p. 154). Throughout Mozambique (and elsewhere) these consultation meetings are regarded as problematic and not inclusive (German, Cavane, Sitoe, & Braga, 2015; Knight, 2010; Milgroom, 2015; Otsuki et al., 2017), leading Porsani and Lalander (2018, p. 31) to conclude that "consultations have been performative spaces in which voices have followed pre-defined scripts and top-down decisions have been legally ratified." The National Meeting framed the problems of the consultation meetings, however, in terms of outreach and cultural issues. One participant put forward the idea of using radio messages to invite people to consultations, which he regarded to be a context sensitive way of informing rural populations. In another panel, the issue of inclusive consultation was discussed by stressing the invaluable role of community leaders as intermediaries between local populations and the government. What was not discussed was the profoundly political character of the community authorities, as these local leaders are often affiliated to one of the main political parties in Mozambique and are frequently co-opted by companies. Furthermore, these leaders are generally male and not always well informed nor do they keep other members of the communities they (claim to) represent well informed (Baleira & Buquine, 2010; Fairbairn, 2013). In the interviews conducted, I found resettlement practitioners of extractive and consultancy

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[5] See also the documentary Big Men (by Rachel Boynton, 2014), which features Anadarko's development of off shore oil extraction in Ghana.

[6] https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/news/total-mozambique-lng-project-anadarko/, accessed 27/01/2020.

companies to be well aware of such political dynamics. Nevertheless, the party politics surrounding the National Meeting and resettlement in general seemed to be taboo issues, as these were conspicuously not discussed. The "lessons" that were of interest to extractive companies and consultancy firms were thus of a specific and apolitical nature. Their interest in participating in the National Meeting was also simply "being there", showing their interest in learning, in order to improve future resettlement processes.

5. NGOs: Learning lessons and looking for funding

The legitimacy of the learning lessons practices is further strengthened by the involvement of critics of extractive practices in Mozambique, including academics, journalists, human rights lawyers, and NGO representatives. In this section, I analyze NGOs, making a distinction between large (international) NGOs generally based in Maputo, such as Oxfam, Centro Terra Viva (CTV), Justiça Ambiental, and WWF Mozambique, and smaller civil society organizations, usually based in provincial capitals and often dependent on funding from larger NGOs. Since Mozambique's extractive turn took full swing, many of these NGOs and civil society organizations have focused on issues related to mega-projects and on ensuring community rights, due legal process and uncovering malpractices (Symons, 2016). Twenty of the Maputo-based organizations have organised themselves in a civil society platform for extractive industries and natural resources, which under the leadership of CTV has been quite successful in giving visibility to questions about land rights issues in relation to the LNG project in the media and in putting them onto donors' agendas (Symons, 2016, p. 153). However, the role of these NGOs is not a univocal one. *Reassentados* in Tete complained about "fake" NGOs that were not serious or were considered to have been "bought" by the government or the company, reflecting widely used "soft" counterinsurgency techniques of using proxy NGOs or astroturfing by extractive industries and governments (Brock & Dunlap, 2018, p. 35; Kraemer, Whiteman, & Banerjee, 2013). Yet the position of NGOs that are critical toward the extractive industry is more complex. Symons (2016) for example shows how CTV and other environmentalist NGOs are co-opted in legitimizing Anadarko's claims on land use in Cabo Delgado by evoking a discourse based on rights and participation, which is duly followed by the extractive companies, especially those which are sensitive to reputational damage. By drawing on transparency as a "regime of truth", Symons (2016) shows how companies integrate the discourses of their critiques, without changing, at least not fundamentally, their operations (Kirsch, 2010). The lessons learning dynamics demonstrate even stronger the mechanism of inclusionary control, as NGOs are squarely involved in (re) producing the practices of learning lessons and actively partake in the production of certain lessons and their dissemination.

In the week before the National Meeting took place in November 2016, two national NGOs, including Oxfam, in collaboration with local civil society organizations from Tete and Cabo Delgado had organised a one-way exchange visit of a delegation of future *reassentados* from the district of Palma, where the LNG project is located, to the resettlement areas in Moatize. The aim of the exchange was for future *reassentados* to learn from the experiences in Tete. The Palma delegation was given a tour of the resettlement areas and several meetings were organised in which *reassentados* from Moatize could share their experience and offer some advice. I was present at their first meeting in Mualadzi, where one of the Mualadzi *reassentados* offered some words of advice to the delegation from Palma: "my brothers", she said, "if I were you, I would not accept resettlement, it is a disgrace. A deceit." At this point one of the NGO representatives intervened, saying: "it is not very productive to discuss if resettlement will be accepted or not. Rather we should focus on what the Palma delegation can learn from the experiences here, to not repeat the same mistakes." Implicitly, the NGO representative referred to Mozambican law by which all land is owned by the state and which privileges the extraction of natural resources over other types of land

use. Resettlement is inevitable in relation to extractive or infrastructure projects that are considered to be in national interest (Porsani & Lalander, 2018). It follows that what the NGO representative considered to be open for discussion are the practicalities of the resettlement process: how to negotiate the best deal and how not to be "tricked" by the companies, or as one of the Mualadzi *reassentados* offered as advice, not to be "tricked" by fake NGOs and leaders who were bought by company money.

The exchange meeting is a prime example of how Mualadzi (as well as other resettlement areas in Tete) has become literally a place that offers lessons about how resettlement should (not) be done. These lessons have also been documented in a series of critical reports by Oxfam Lillywhite et al. (2015), Human Rights Watch (2013) and WLSA Osório & Cruz e Silva (2017) that offered recommendations for improving resettlement practices in Tete, but also provided general recommendations for other resettlement processes. These reports have had their effects in generating some–albeit varied– response and action from the mining companies in Tete. In particular Vale seems to have been quite responsive and has taken up some of the recommendations. In the case of Rio Tinto, a response could not be clearly observed, since the company sold the Benga concession in 2014 to ICVL. More generally, these reports testify to the rise of civil society activism, as Symons (2016) concludes, which has increased demands for transparency and legality, in particular in relation to the LNG project in Cabo Delgado. The lessons learned are thus implicitly and explicitly used to ameliorate resettlement processes elsewhere, although in very particular—often technical—ways.

More important for the argument of this article is that at the time of research in 2017, I learned that Oxfam's department that dealt with the extractive industry was not involved in the province of Tete anymore. The exchange trip was part of their project funding for projects related to future gas extraction in Cabo Delgado. This shift in focus was largely depended on funding (im)possibilities. Simply put, project funds for the Cabo Delgado area were easier to obtain from Oxfam's international headquarters and donors, since resettlement there had just started and because large oil companies were involved with their company headquarters either in the US or Europe. "Tete" where resettlement at least for the largest part had already happened, seemed to be out of fashion.

Oxfam was not an exception, as other NGOs such as CTV also scaled their activities in Tete down. This had particularly detrimental consequences for the civil society organizations that are based in Tete province, which form so-called "local partner organizations" and serve as intermediaries between the (inter)national NGOs located in Maputo (such as Oxfam and CTV) and the people affected by resettlement. Most of these larger NGOs depend on funding from their own headquarters or from international NGOs, or European countries, which is one way in which donors are able to influence the extractive sector in Mozambique. Donor engagement, Symons (2016, pp. 153–154) notes, "is intended to create a secure, predictable and business-friendly environment, promoting free markets and embedding ideals of liberal governmentality." I would add that the logics of donor funding do not only attempt to shape *how* business is conducted, but also influence *where* donor funds are spent at a particular moment in time.

This discussion does not only show the vulnerability of civil society organizations to trends and their (indirect) dependency on big business. A similar argument can be made for academic research funding, which is not neutral to the lure of big businesses either (Giroux, 2014; Nocella Anthony, Best, & McLaren, 2010), even if only to criticise them. More relevant to the argument in this paper is that the language of extractive companies and governments, in this case practices about learning lessons, sets the parameters of the debate about mining and shapes the use of language by those who are critical of mining (see also F. Li, 2009; Kirsch, 2014). By taking part in learning lessons efforts, NGOs such as Oxfam are left few opportunities to address fundamental questions about dispossession and forced displacement, therefore merely contributing to the technical debate of how to get resettlement right. Yet

there were also NGOs that opted out of this technical debate (see F. Li, 2009). The NGO Justiça Ambiental (Environmental Justice, JA), for instance, opposes mining in general, including the displacement and dispossession that is involved in this process. The director of JA, Anabela Lemos, called the role of transnational corporations and foreign direct investment as vehicles for development an "illusion." "The transnational corporations do not help any country, what they do is make themselves even richer at the expense of our resources," she continued. On the topic of Tete, the director said: "Development? Look at Tete. Look at 'everything' that coal brought to Tete. In 2004/5, we, 'the antidevelopment radicals', gave the warning and few believed. Today, most people are already beginning to grasp the said impending outcome."[7] However, such a stance, as the governor of Gaza recently contended at the second National Meeting on Resettlement (held on 30 November and 1 December 2018), is considered to be "against the common interest" and "against development".

6. Conclusion

In Mozambique, resettlement is one of the most direct ways in which local populations experience the impact of large-scale investment projects. It is at the same time one of the most problematic aspects of land acquisition, a pertinent security issues for investment projects, *and* increasingly regarded as an opportunity for (sustainable) development. Taking the first National Meeting on Resettlement organized by the Mozambican government in November 2016 as a starting point, this article detailed how resettlement processes in the context of coal mining in Tete province are used as "worst case scenarios" offering lessons for improving other resettlement practices, in particular the resettlements planned for the LNG projects in Cabo Delgado province. The first and second National Meetings on resettlement can thus be regarded as moments of knowledge generation, evaluation, and discussion around resettlement in Mozambique. As I have shown in this article, the topics under discussion and evaluation were largely of a technical and legal nature and prevented the questioning of political dynamics and actual accountability for the failures of resettlement and the comprehensive implementation of procedures, regulations, and laws (cf. Ferguson, 1990; T. Li, 2007). Consequently, I suggest conceptualizing the National Meeting as a performance of good intentions and transparency, thereby legitimizing dispossession and displacement for extractive development. The language of "learning lessons" that is a crucial part of this performance should be considered as part of political practices that emphasizes the virtual and the ritual of learning lessons rather than the actual learning experience.

The learning lessons practices detailed in this article are part of a larger audit culture in which monitoring and evaluation practices come to stand for transparency, accountability and the creation of best practices. Learning lessons may be a particularly persuasive strategy to curb critical voices due to its inclusionary nature, as it brings together different actors, such as government agencies, extractive corporations, consultants, communities, and civil society organizations, under the banner of future improvement and development. By incorporating practices of learning and the discourse of process, critical NGOs and civil society organizations buy into the main argument and political agenda of extractive development, as it prevents them from rejecting or resisting extractive projects (see also Kirsch, 2014; F. Li, 2009). Thereby learning lessons forms a key political practice "from above" and a mechanism of inclusionary control that forges the acceptance of extractive projects and related dispossession and displacement and keeps conflict in a manageable phase.

Finally, the analysis of efforts to learn lessons from resettlements in Tete showed that counter-mobilization strategies "from above" do not exist in the isolation of one project or one sector. Rather the findings demonstrate how these processes should be understood in a national (and possibly wider) context of large-scale investments. The focus on learning lessons in addressing the resettlement practices in Moatize legitimizes the resettlement of populations for extractive projects elsewhere, as evaluation efforts sustain the idea that "things will be better in Cabo Delgado." A paradoxical situation is created in which criticism of one resettlement experience is used to legitimize similar processes of dispossession elsewhere. Meanwhile the opposition of those affected by resettlement in Tete is losing resonance, allowing the coal mining companies to continue with business as usual.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102192.

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[7] Interview with Anabela Lemos accessed at https://ja4change.wordpress.com/2018/12/21/7-questions-to-anabela-lemos-the-director-of-justica-ambiental/?fbclid=IwAR0Jg3VVSqbEPnlHUWe7xhWWwzzx3Uqowfkp_NN3cAO-xCnewjctRkrLdb8 on 23 January 2019.

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